

July 8, 2020

To the Members of the Stonington Board of Education and Dr. Riley:

I am resigning from the Board of Education, effective immediately. As you are aware, I have been in cancer treatment since February and this will continue through at least next February. After several months away from BOE meetings, I re-engaged in June, only to find that the divisive forces and toxic nature of this particular board demand more of me than I am able to give.

I am so proud of Stonington Schools and what the district has been able to accomplish under the leadership of Dr. Riley and his respective team. It has been an honor to serve on the Board and although I intended to complete my full term, I see no viable path to the finish line while maintaining my mental and physical health.

The optics of my resignation won't play well for me or the district in terms of the local media. However, I take comfort in knowing that in my nearly four years of service to the board I have stood on the side of justice and equity and championed the right of all children to reach their optimal educational potential. I have actively learned how to respect the role and responsibility of being a board member and worked to support the worthy goals of the district.

With another surgery scheduled for August, getting four children off to college, entering new phases of treatment, and preparing for my own return to school in the midst of a pandemic, I will not have the stamina needed to meet the ordinary needs of the board in the short term, much less those of a board in extraordinary circumstances over the next year.

I am deeply grateful to have served on the board and to have met so many incredibly talented and dedicated individuals along the way. The success of Stonington Schools over the last seven years must be truly unrivaled by any comparable district. The board is at a critical juncture where it must choose between maintaining a hostile stance toward administration that will alienate future exemplary candidates from choosing a culture defined by mutual trust, support and continued growth, or realign itself in order to prevent the next generation of administrators who may take a more authoritarian approach, in turn reducing morale, transparency and the vibrant learning culture that defines Stonington. More than anything, the board must remember that we are guided by the principle of all "children first". If it can get back to that tenet as a starting place there is hope for the continued accomplishments of a very strong district.

Respectfully submitted,

Candace Anderson, Ph.D.
Secretary, Stonington Board of Education

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